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SUBJECT: CAUTIOUS HOPES FOR ZUMA AMONG SOME SOUTH AFRICAN
NGOS

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Summary

¶1. (SBU) South African civil society groups are cautiously optimistic about President Jacob Zuma, believing his promises of openness and meaningful dialogue will improve their working environment. Under former President Thabo Mbeki, many groups felt isolated from leadership and shut out from meaningful work. With the country grappling with tough issues like xenophobic attacks, poverty, inadequate health care, and crime, NGO sources felt the need was urgent to engage the state and strengthen its advocacy. Poloff met with a small sample of civil society organizations to understand how their roles may evolve under the new administration. These organizations were chosen to reflect some of the most pressing issues in South Africa and the role civil society would undertake to improve current conditions. End Summary.

A A Look at Select NGOS in South Africa

¶2. (SBU) AfriForum Youth, the pro-Afrikaner civil rights group, respected Zuma personally but was cautiously waiting for him to act on his campaign promises. Secretary General Ebert Grobler said, "Zuma can have the best or worst administration ... It is too early to judge." Funded by members rather than the SAG, AfriForum Youth was unconcerned about financial support from the Zuma administration. AfriForum has over 1,000 members with membership costs ranging from \$5 to \$11. The group was lobbying for a shift in affirmative action policy. AfriForum felt the policy's current focus solely on race (people of color), was unfair to other ethnic groups from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. AfriForum is advocating for a new policy based on socioeconomic status alone. Grobler was hopeful that under Zuma's leadership the SAG would soon undertake such changes.

¶3. (SBU) Human Rights Watch is an independent organization focused on defending and protecting human rights. Some of their direct action is specifically geared toward investigation of human rights abuse and presenting these reports to government and policy makers. The group indicated that fundraising can be problematic at times, but is extremely grateful for the help from American-based foundations. The operating budget of Human Rights Watch specifically geared to Africa is \$5,532,631, 75 percent of

which comes from individual donors. Senior Researcher Tiseke Kasambala reiterates a common theme heard from other groups... that Zuma is more open in terms of policy implementation and is very aware of past human rights issues and those that are currently surfacing. She indicated that Zuma is more flexible and open to meeting with Human Rights Watch than Mbeki was. Kasambala indicated that she could call government on the phone as a representative from Human Rights Watch and "be sure to get an answer." She also said that if she did not get an answer immediately, government would call back, which shows the leverage of the organization. The group is very hopeful of their mission in South Africa. Kasambala said, "There are so many issues for our organization to deal with and funding is another barrier to our progress, but we are heavily depending on our partners to help us continue our mission."

14. (SBU) Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition is comprised of three hundred civic groups that are currently organized under five committees: Information, Advocacy, Youth, Human Rights and Peace Building in Zimbabwe. The total operating budget of the organization is \$190,840. Eleanor Sisulu, director of the organization and daughter-in-law to legendary ANC leader Walter Sisulu, indicated that her organization was able to raise awareness and make the government conscious of issues surrounding Zimbabwe. However, she noted, "The organization is still trying to assess the direction of the government under Zuma." She admits that on foreign policy engagement, it will not be easy because this sector of government is still stuck in old Mbeki policies. Sisulu expects her organization to continue thriving under the current political conditions. She has indicated that most civil society organizations need to be more articulate in their engagement and need fresh approaches to lobbying the state.

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15. (SBU) The South African Liaison Office (SALO) is an international liaison, dialogue and research organization most active on building consensus around South African and international response to the situations in Zimbabwe and Swaziland. Its roots lie with student and other activists who saw a need for steering government to support democracy in Zimbabwe by creating linkages between former Zimbabwean opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leaders and their counterparts in the ANC and South African Government (SAG). Lucian Segami, a member of the ANC's International Relations committee and manager of SALO, said civil society had access to the SAG through people like him, who were also active members of the ANC. He believes that civil society's influence on government policy is likely to increase under Zuma for several reasons. Segami thinks the new SAG is more sensitive to public opinion than Mbeki was and more interested in internal democracy within the ANC. He said, "Definitely government will listen to civil society." According to Segami, the ANC is currently implementing a mechanism for branch level input on policy issues. He added that the ANC itself, as well as its alliance partners, the South African Communist Party and Congress of South African Trade Unions, which both sympathize with the MDC, will have a much more influential role under Zuma. Segami believes the SAG will be receptive to MDC input on South Africa's role and policies towards Zimbabwe.

16. (SBU) Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) -- which has often been accused of being too pro-American -- is driven by several programs that include Community and Citizen Empowerment, Economic Governance, Governance and Aids and Initiative for Leadership and Democracy in Africa. IDASA's operating budget is \$9,659,421 and about 90 percent of this budget comes from international donors (including the United States). Yvette Geyer, acting director of IDASA, is very hopeful regarding the leadership of President Zuma. She indicated that her organization rarely disagrees with policies implemented by government. Instead, she claimed

that their role is to effectively communicate to the public the governments, rationale on specific issues. To do this, Geyer said, they work with the South African Government by publishing press statements and holding meetings in local municipalities. Through this, she said, "We have been able to influence government on foreign policy, as well as facilitate a political discussion with leaders from the ANC."

Geyer noted that IDASA is one of the few civil society groups granted access to the government.

17. (SBU) South Africa Cares for Life is a NGO that supports women, children and families affected by unplanned pregnancies, abortion, dire poverty, HIV and AIDs. Their current operating budget is \$273,463. South Africa Cares for Life indicated that it is too early to truly understand the direction the Zuma administration will take. However, the organization did say that Zuma made a visit, out of courtesy, to one of its facilities before his election. (Note: South Africa Cares for Life officials say when Zuma visited the facility, he held "as many babies as he could" because he was so intrigued by the group's work. End Note.) Managing Qso intrigued by the group's work. End Note.) Managing Director Rieke Van Der Berg indicated that she is inspired by SA Cares for Life's mission. She credits this optimism to her organization's spiritual background and calling to render this form of service to the South African community. Van Der Berg said, "As far as government support is concerned, most of our work does not rely on government intervention but rests heavily with committed individuals willing to make a difference."

18. (SBU) Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), which was one of the most marginalized groups under the Mbeki administration, is a consortium of community health advocates. The driving force behind their direct action is rooted in awareness campaigns and in researching health related issues. The operating budget for TAC is \$5,087,527. Over 80% of funding comes from 14 international donors. TAC indicated that the new government at least acknowledges health disparities whereas under the Mbeki administration, there was a sense of denial in government due to the fact that there was a self-serving and closed-minded health minister in office, said Mokhunda. TAC challenged many policies under the Mbeki administration. Mbeki refused to meet with TAC. However, Zuma is showing signs of greater flexibility and a desire to

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be accessible. Zuma has accepted the fact that HIV can be minimized through treatment, and the ANC has made a commitment to fighting HIV. Neo Mokhunda, representative from TAC, is very hopeful about the future of TAC's mission.

This hopefulness is credited to the national commitment from government, its acknowledgment of serious health issues and its desire to remove health deficiencies with the availability of funding. TAC will continue to monitor government implementation.

Comment

19. (SBU) Zuma is closely approaching the 100 day mark in office. He is making it a personal mission to visit different communities and thank them for their support during the election. From a civil society perspective, Zuma must do more than thank them with his words, but also with his tangible actions that bring results. According to Civil Society, these results include being more action-driven around civil rights, human rights, health care and improving the quality of life for the citizens of South Africa. Most groups feel that it is too early to label Zuma as an ideal leader, but they are remaining optimistic in their mission to build a better South Africa regardless of difficult issues, limited funding and support from government. Only time will tell how Zuma treats civil society over the long term -- particularly when groups criticize him -- but his creating

space for dialogue is an important first step to regaining
the trust lost under Mbeki.
LA LIME